



Australian Government

WATER MATTERS

Issue 7
November 2009

2009 in review

Upcoming Community
Information Sessions

Ramsar Secretary
General visits Australia

Building Australia-China
water relations

Assistance for irrigation
water providers

Bioremediation
produces positive
results

Environmental watering
in 2009

World Wetlands Day -
2 February 2010

Wetland Art Competition

Announcements

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Message from the Minister

This past year we have made real progress in laying the foundations for Australia's water future.

Through the Australian Government's 10-year \$12.9 billion *Water for the Future* plan, we are determined to make the management of our rivers and water resources more sustainable, while assisting Australian communities to adjust to a future with less water under climate change.

Given the pressing need to address historic over-allocation, declining river health and climate change in the Murray-Darling Basin, a key component of *Water for the Future* is the Government's plan to put the Basin back onto a sustainable footing.

There are three essential elements to our approach:

- a new Basin Plan that will set new, scientifically based, sustainable limits on water use;
- extensive investment in more efficient irrigation systems; and
- purchasing water from willing sellers to return to our rivers and wetlands.

With the establishment of the new independent Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA), work is now well underway towards development of the Basin Plan. Its centrepiece will be new Sustainable Diversion Limits for the Basin's surface water and groundwater resources, drawing on the most up-to-date scientific and socio-economic information available.

A draft of the Basin Plan will be released in mid-2010 for extensive public consultation before it is finalised in mid-2011. Under the terms of the 2008 Inter-Governmental Agreement on Murray-Darling Basin Reform, the final decision on the Basin Plan rests with the Federal Water Minister.

In preparing Basin communities for the changes ahead, smarter and more efficient water management and use, both on and off-farm, is vital. To this end the Australian Government has so far committed \$4.4 billion towards infrastructure projects that will also see a share of water efficiency savings returned to our rivers.



Senator Penny Wong and Dr Mike Kelly at Hattah Lakes on the recent Southern Basin tour (H Conkey)

Purchasing water entitlement from willing sellers, at a fair market price, is another way of returning water to the rivers and wetlands of the Murray-Darling Basin. In all instances, water purchase priorities are based on environmental need and value for money. As at 30 October, the Australian Government had secured 638 billion litres of water entitlement worth \$996 million.

Through this 'no regrets' approach to water purchase, the Australian Government is helping smooth the transition for irrigation communities in anticipation of new, lower limits on water use under the Basin Plan.

This record drought impacts on all water entitlement holders, including the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder. Even so, we've so far been able to allocate 26.7 billion litres of Commonwealth water to 25 sites in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales.

Earlier this year whilst touring the southern Basin, I was able to see firsthand the results of environmental watering at the internationally significant Hattah Lakes complex in Victoria. Clearly, the provision of water to such sites is benefiting waterbirds, River Red Gums, our rivers and wetland ecosystems.

In communicating the Government's Basin reforms and investments, the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts is holding a series of community information sessions around the Basin. Feedback from these well-attended sessions has been constructive, and more sessions will be held next year.

Many of Australia's cities and towns are also facing some big challenges in securing their water supplies as a result of extended drought and projected growth in demand. The already-emerging impacts of climate change add further urgency to this task.

In response, the Australian Government has committed \$1.5 billion towards a range of initiatives towards securing urban water supplies, and reducing reliance on traditional rain-fed water sources.

To date significant funding has been directed to a number of wastewater recycling, stormwater harvesting and

desalination projects around the country. Funding has also been made available to support individual Australians in taking action to conserve water resources by installing rainwater tanks and greywater systems.

You will find more detailed reports in this edition of *Water Matters* about the progress we are making in particular programs.

Whilst there is still much to be done, our *Water for the Future* plan is well underway. In the year ahead we will build on our achievements to date, working closely with our stakeholders in the water industry, agriculture, state and local government and the broader community.

I look forward to the new year ahead.

Senator the Hon Penny Wong
Minister for Climate Change and Water

Upcoming Community Information Sessions

Over the past month a series of community information sessions have been held in Deniliquin, Griffith, Shepparton, Swan Hill, Renmark and Mildura. The sessions aim to provide an opportunity for attendees to better understand the Australian Government's \$12.9 billion *Water for the Future* initiative and to raise issues of concern to them.

Feedback from participants has been very positive. Much of the success has been attributed to the open format which allows plenty of time for people to ask questions of senior staff about the issues which are important to them such as water purchasing, infrastructure upgrade programs and environmental watering.

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry have also attended the sessions to assist in answering questions relating to the Basin Plan and drought assistance measures.

In December events will be held in the following locations:

- **Dubbo - Tuesday 1 December 2009**
Dubbo RSL Club Resort, Cnr Brisbane and Wingewarra Sts
- **Bourke - Wednesday 2 December 2009**
Oxley RSL Club, Cnr Mitchell and Sturt Sts
- **Moree - Tuesday 8 December 2009**
The Max Function & Conference Centre, Cnr Balo & Heber Sts
- **Goondiwindi - Wednesday 9 December 2009**
Goondiwindi Training and Technology, 15-21 Russell St
- **St George - Thursday 10 December 2009**
Balonne Skills Centre, 2/2 Victoria St

For more information on these sessions please visit

<http://www.environment.gov.au/water/australia/community-input/information-sessions> or call 1800 218 478.

Ramsar Secretary General visits Australia

Mr Anada Tiega, the Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, visited Australia in late October and saw first-hand the work Australia is doing to protect its unique wetlands and implementing the Ramsar Convention.

The visit provided Mr Tiega with the opportunity to see some Australian Ramsar wetlands and meet with site managers and other key stakeholders to discuss the opportunities and challenges facing Australia in managing our wetlands. Mr Tiega visited the Boondall Wetlands Environment Centre, part of the Moreton Bay Ramsar site in south-east Queensland, the Macquarie Marshes and Towra Point Nature Reserve Ramsar sites in New South Wales, and the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar site in South Australia.



From left to right: Dr James Horne (Deputy Secretary, DEWHA), Mr Anada Tiega (Ramsar Secretary General), Mr Kenny Wauchope (Chairman, Cobourg Peninsula Sanctuary Board, NT), Mr Peter Fitzgerald (Senior District Ranger, Garig Gunak Barlu National Park, NT) and Professor Max Finlayson (Director, Land, Water and Society, Charles Sturt University). Photo: Imaging Services Section, DEWHA

Whilst in Canberra on 30 October 2009, Mr Tiega met the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, the Hon Peter Garrett AM MP, International Organisational Partners (IOPs) including World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Australia, Wetland International Oceania, Birds Australia, the Australian Committee for IUCN as well as the Australian Wetlands Alliance to discuss Australia's implementation of the Ramsar Convention.

Mr Tiega also addressed Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts staff at a morning tea to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the listing of Cobourg Peninsula as the world's first Wetland of International Importance. Mr Kenny Wauchope, Traditional Owner and Chair of the Cobourg Peninsula Sanctuary and Marine Park Board, and Mr Peter Fitzgerald, Senior District Ranger of the Garig Gunak Barlu National Park, attended the celebration.

The morning tea also saw the launch of the updated DEWHA wetland web pages including a redesigned Australian Wetlands Database. An important resource for wetland managers is sound data and information about the values of wetlands on which to base management decisions. This database provides online access to information on Australia's Ramsar wetlands and sites listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands of Australia, our internationally and nationally important wetlands respectively. The database is accessible through the wetlands web pages at www.environment.gov.au/wetlands.

Building Australia - China water relations

The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts hosted an Australia – China High Level Water Policy meeting on 27-28 October 2009.

Parliamentary Secretary for Water, Dr Mike Kelly AM MP, met the Chinese delegation, led by Vice Minister Hu Siyi of the Ministry of Water Resources at Parliament House.

“I hope that these important talks between our Ministries continue and we continue to build on our strong relationship,” Dr Kelly said.

The Chinese delegation then visited a number of sites of interest in the Murray-Darling Basin.

China and Australia share many issues of mutual interest in water resource management, and the meeting provided an opportunity to compare policy approaches.

The meeting involved senior representatives from Australian and Chinese government agencies, and promoted high-level water policy linkages and information exchange between Australia and China.

The meeting was funded through the AusAID Australia – China Environment Development Partnership.



Dr Mike Kelly exchanging gifts with Vice Minister Hu Siyi

Assistance for irrigation water providers

Irrigation water providers, who operate water delivery systems within the Murray-Darling Basin, are eligible to obtain assistance for the development of a modernisation plan, through the Irrigation Modernisation Planning Assistance program.

The program's objective is to assist irrigation water providers to identify and consider a range of options available to increase the efficiency of their irrigation systems and adapt to a future with less water.

Up to \$2 million is available for eligible projects under this program, with funding of up to \$350,000 available per irrigation water provider to complete a modernisation plan.

Nearly \$5 million in projects has previously been funded under this program, involving 17 irrigation water providers, and 27 irrigation areas throughout Australia.

To be eligible for assistance, an applicant must:

- own or operate infrastructure within the Murray-Darling Basin for the purpose of delivering water to other persons for the primary purpose of agricultural irrigation;

- be a legal entity capable of entering a Funding Agreement with the Australian Government (note: unincorporated associations are not eligible);
- be registered with the Australian Taxation Office for Goods and Services Tax purposes with a valid Australian Business Number (ABN); and
- provide a 20 per cent cash co-contribution to the total cost of the modernisation planning exercise (Funding from State or other Australian Government funding sources will not be considered as eligible co-contributions).

The most recent funding round opened on 29 October 2009 and will remain open to receive and assess applications until 29 October 2012, unless available funds are committed earlier.

More information on the program is available at www.environment.gov.au/water/programs or by calling 1800 218 478 or email: waterplanenquiries@environment.gov.au

Lake beds showing improvement

The exposed lake beds of the Lower Lakes showed improvements during the winter and spring as the Australian and South Australian Governments continue to manage the serious threat of acidification facing the Lower Lakes under the \$10 million bioremediation and revegetation project.

Acid sulfate soils naturally occur where there are large amounts of sulfate and organic material in the water. As long as the soils are covered by water they are harmless to the environment, but if water levels drop and the soils are exposed to the air they react with oxygen to form sulfuric acid. When these soils are rewet the acid, metals and nutrients can be mobilised. This has the potential to decrease the pH in the water body as well as increasing the concentration of contaminants, which affects fish, animals and vegetation.

With water levels dropping below sea level due to low inflows, large amounts of actual and potential acid sulfate soils have become exposed on the lakebeds of the Lower Lakes.

To address this serious issue, urgent bioremediation and revegetation works have been taking place throughout 2009 to tackle the ecological threats facing Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert. Approximately 5000 hectares of machine and aerial seeding was undertaken at the Lower Lakes in May 2009.

Most recently, seeding has begun along the lake bed of the Meningie foreshore using *Puccinellia ciliate*, a species of grass commonly used in agricultural areas around Lake Albert.

The seeding will help to manage the risk of acidification by stabilising the soil and providing organic material to return carbon to the sediment. The seeding will also help to reduce dust movement in high winds and increase habitat for wildlife, contributing to the long-term management of the internationally important wetland.

Further action under the project includes \$220,000 which has been provided to the Milang Progress Association. This funding will help to establish the regional Lakes Hub in the town of Milang and employ key staff to help coordinate the on-ground implementation of the project.

The Lakes Hub will play an important role in keeping the community informed about the bioremediation and revegetation project and how they can become involved, and will act as a meeting place for the community and project coordinators.



The bioremediation and revegetation project has so far been quite successful with larger than expected areas of seeded soil flourishing. Photo above is before seeding, and below is after successful seeding.



The Hub will also provide a place for the community to gain further information about how they can become involved in the bioremediation and revegetation project.

Other actions taking place under the project include weed management and fencing, ecological monitoring and reporting, development of local action plans, workshops and training for local communities, and funding for the Ngarrindjeri community for bioremediation projects.

These works are part of the Australian Government's \$10 million bioremediation and revegetation project, administered by the South Australian Government.

Watering allocation for the environment more than doubles

Wetlands, River Red Gums, threatened species and migratory birds are expected to benefit from 15.8 gigalitres (billion litres or GL) of Commonwealth water to be released at more than a dozen sites in New South Wales and Victoria.

The allocations take the total volume of Commonwealth water returned to the environment under the Australian Government's Water for the Future initiative to 26.7 GL.

The first water allocations for Spring 2009 occurred in October at Yanga National Park near Balranald in the Murrumbidgee catchment of southern NSW. A total of 1.9 GL was released at Mercedes Swamp and Twin Bridges wetland on the Lowbidgee Floodplain. The NSW Government also contributed 1.5 GL towards this watering.

These sites are important breeding areas for the Southern Bell Frog, and species protected under international treaties on migratory birds have also been recorded there. Several nationally threatened species such as the Painted Snipe and Regent Parrot, may also benefit from the watering.

Hattah Lakes in north-western Victoria, which is listed under the Ramsar convention as a wetland of international importance, received 3.1 GL of Commonwealth water. The Victorian Government also provided 3.2 GL towards this inundation.

The lakes are important for maintaining the genetic and ecological diversity of the region because the floodplain complex supports a large variety and number of waterbirds and includes breeding habitat for many species. This watering follows an allocation of Commonwealth water to Hattah Lakes in autumn of 2.1 GL.

Wetlands in the Murray, Murrumbidgee and Macquarie valleys of NSW were allocated a further 10.8 GL of Commonwealth environmental water that is being released during November and December. This includes an additional 3.0 GL for wetlands in Yanga National Park.

Recently, 19.3 GL has been used at Macquarie Marshes by NSW, and the Commonwealth will be providing a small amount of water towards this event that will benefit Buckinguy Swamp, Mole Marsh, Willancorah and the southern part of the North Nature Reserve.

Werai State Forest, a Ramsar site in the Murray catchment was allocated 4.5 GL, which is expected to flood approximately 500 hectares of River Red Gum forest.

Toupna Creek in Millewa State Forest, also a Ramsar site, was allocated 1.5 GL to provide habitat and drought refuge for the endangered Southern Pygmy Perch and to benefit in-stream macrophytes (aquatic plants) and fringing River Red Gums.

A total of 1.7 GL was allocated to 'top-up' various sites including Wee Wee Creek, Grand Junction, Nampoo Station and Aduco Lagoon all of which received NSW environmental water earlier this year. These 'top-up' waterings, on both the Murray and Darling rivers, are expected to provide increased opportunities for aquatic plant species to set seed, and assist populations of the Southern Bell Frog to complete their lifecycle.

All the sites were selected by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) after receiving input from Basin state governments and local site managers and advice from the Environmental Water Scientific Advisory Committee.

More information about the sites and the Australian Government's environmental watering program can be found at:

www.environment.gov.au/water/policy-programs/cewh/



Before and after photos of the Katarapko Floodplain in South Australia, which has received environmental water from the Australian Government in 2009 (DEWHA & M Mohell)

World Wetlands Day - 2 February 2010

Wetlands are an important part of the Australian landscape. They protect our shores from wave action, reduce the impacts of floods, absorb pollutants and improve water quality. They provide habitat for animals and plants and many contain a wide diversity of life, supporting plants and animals that are found nowhere else.

The term 'wetlands' encompasses a vast range of water-based areas including swamps, marshes, billabongs, lakes, salt marshes, mudflats, mangroves, coral reefs, fens and peatlands.

World Wetlands Day 2010 is approaching. Celebrated internationally each year on 2 February, it marks the anniversary of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention) in Ramsar, Iran, on 2 February 1971.

The theme for 2010 acknowledges the current challenges the world's wetlands are dealing with in the face of climate change. The 'wetlands, biodiversity and climate change' theme encourages people to focus on wetland ecosystems, their biodiversity, how climate change is affecting these ecosystems and most importantly, what we can do to preserve and maintain our wetlands.

The Australian Government is consistently working towards improving the health and vitality of our Ramsar wetland sites and other wetlands, through a number of initiatives such as environmental watering under *Water for the Future*, and on-ground restoration projects through *Caring for our Country*.

Under *Caring for our Country*, aquatic ecosystems are recognised as significant environmental assets that provide a wide range of services fundamentally important to the Australian lifestyle and economy. A number of priorities under *Caring for our Country* are designed to make a real on-ground difference to wetland health, and ensure that funding goes to those areas and projects across the nation that best meet the ecological challenges we face.



Cobourg Peninsula recently celebrated its 35th anniversary of being listed as the world's first Wetland of International Importance. (Jeanette Muirhead)

Through *Water for the Future*, the Australian Government is acquiring water entitlements from willing sellers and allocating water to environmental assets in need of protection or restoration. *Water for the Future* is also investing in infrastructure efficiencies to achieve water savings, a share of these savings to be dedicated to the environment.

Celebrate World Wetlands Day on 2 February 2010 by undertaking actions to raise public awareness of wetland values and benefits and promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

For more information on wetlands and what is happening in your region on World Wetlands Day, visit www.environment.gov.au/wetlands to view the Calendar of Events.

If your community group or organisation would like your World Wetlands Day event advertised on the Calendar of Events, please email details of the event to wetlandsmail@environment.gov.au by 15 January 2010.

2010 WetlandCare Australia National Art and Photography Competition

To celebrate World Wetlands Day 2010, WetlandCare Australia has organised an Australia-wide Art and Photography competition, offering categories for children and adults.

They are seeking artworks exploring the theme of Wetlands, Biodiversity and Climate Change.

Entry forms and more information is available at www.wetlandcare.com.au

Announcements

Groundwater experts meet to tackle future management challenges - 24 November 2009

The Parliamentary Secretary for Water, the Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM MP, today opened the National Water Commission's inaugural national Groundwater Forum, which has brought together 120 of Australia's leading groundwater experts to discuss the challenges in managing the nation's groundwater and the associated reform actions agreed under the National Water Initiative.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/kelly/2009/mr20091124.html>

Commonwealth provides 10.8 billion litres of water for New South Wales and wetlands - 19 November 2009

(Joint media release - Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, and John Robertson MLC New South Wales Minister for Climate Change and the Environment)

The Commonwealth has allocated 10.8 billion litres of water to 13 environmental sites in New South Wales (NSW), including wetlands in the Murray, Murrumbidgee and Macquarie valleys. The water is part of the Commonwealth's environmental water holdings, purchased through the Government's water buyback program for the Murray-Darling Basin. This allocation brings the total Commonwealth water allocated to date to the environment to 26.7 billion litres.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/November/mr20091119a.aspx>

Environmental water to protect iconic river red gums - 19 November 2009

(Joint media release - Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong and Gavin Jennings Victorian Minister for Environment and Climate Change)

An extra eight billion litres of water will be released to internationally significant wetlands along the Murray River to assist threatened river red gums and provide drought relief for wetland dependent species. Environment and Climate Change Minister Gavin Jennings said the water, released through the Living Murray program, will flow into Lindsay and Wallpolla Islands, Gunbower Forest and Barmah Forest prior to summer this year and during autumn 2010.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/November/mr20091119.aspx>

Drought update shows poor outlook - 13 November 2009

The release of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's latest Drought Update raises more concerns about the impact of climate change on the Basin's water resources, the Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong said. Attending the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council meeting with State Basin water ministers in Brisbane, Minister Wong said the outlook on water resources for the whole Basin remains poor.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/November/mr20091113.aspx>

Agreement signed to support more efficient irrigation in Tasmania - 11 November 2009

(Joint media release - Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong and David Llewellyn MP, Tasmanian Minister for Primary Industries and Water)

The development of new and highly water efficient irrigation projects in Tasmania will receive a \$14.8 million boost from the Australian Government.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/November/mr20091111.aspx>

Improved water security for the Eurobodalla - 10 November 2009

Construction begins on the new potable water treatment facility adjacent to Denhams Beach Reservoir as part of a plan to improve water quality for residents in the Eurobodalla Shire. Parliamentary Secretary for Water, Dr Mike Kelly turned the first sod at the construction site of the new treatment facility. The treatment facility is part of the Eurobodalla Pipeline and Water Treatment Facilities Project that the Australian Government has contributed \$15 million to under the Water Smart Australia program.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/kelly/2009/mr20091110.html>

Next stage of bioremediation work starts - 09 November 2009

(Joint media release - Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong and South Australian Environment and Conservation Minister Jay Weatherill)

A \$10 million program to manage acidification in the Lower Lakes has expanded following promising results in a series of trial projects. Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, and South Australian Environment and Conservation Minister Jay Weatherill said the next stage of bioremediation work had commenced at projects located in Meningie and near Milang.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/November/mr20091109a.aspx>

\$56 million for development of a national water market system - 09 November 2009

Australia's water market will be significantly strengthened following a \$56 million investment by the Rudd Government to develop a faster, more efficient and nationally focused water market system, the Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, announced.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/November/mr20091109.aspx>

Tumut Golf Course Effluent Reuse Scheme opened - 9 November 2009

Recycled water will now be used at the Tumut Golf Course after Parliamentary Secretary for Water, Dr Mike Kelly, officially opened the Tumut Golf Course Effluent Reuse Scheme today. Funding of \$500,000 was provided by the Australian Government towards the \$710,000 project, under the Water Smart Australia program, which plays a key role in implementing the 10-year, \$12.9 billion *Water for the Future* initiative.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/kelly/2009/mr20091109.html>

Lower Lakes irrigation pipeline delivers first water - 3 November 2009

(Joint media release - Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, South Australian Minister for the River Murray and Minister for Water Security, Karlene Maywald, and South Australian Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Paul Caica)

Work on the irrigation pipeline from Jervois to the Langhorne and Currency creek regions has been completed in time to deliver water to irrigators for this 2009-10 irrigation season. To mark the completion of the pipeline, Federal Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, Minister for the River Murray and Minister for Water Security, Karlene Maywald, and Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Paul Caica, visited Angas Vineyards at Langhorne Creek.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/en/minister/wong/2009/media-releases.aspx>

\$86 Million for stormwater harvesting and reuse - 02 November 2009

(Joint media release - Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, and South Australian Premier Mike Rann)

Thirteen organisations will share in \$86 million to undertake innovative stormwater capture projects to help secure water supplies for Australian cities. Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, announced the outcome of the first funding round for Stormwater Harvesting and Reuse Projects while visiting Cheltenham in Adelaide with South Australian Premier Mike Rann.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/November/mr20091101.aspx>

Hattah Lakes wetlands receive environmental water - 30 October 2009

(Joint media release - Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong and Gavin Jennings Victorian Minister for Environment and Climate Change)

The Australian Government will provide 3.1 billion litres of water to the internationally significant Hattah Lakes wetlands in Victoria, providing increased drought refuge for water birds and maintaining the health of River Red Gums.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/October/mr20091030.aspx>

Commonwealth Water for Murrumbidgee Wetlands - 28 October 2009

The Commonwealth is providing almost two billion litres of water for wetlands containing endangered species in Yanga National Park, in southern New South Wales.

A total of 1,904 million litres from the Commonwealth's environmental water holdings, purchased through the Australian Government's Murray-Darling Basin water buyback program, is being provided to two sites this month.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/October/mr20091028b.aspx>

\$2 million in grants for irrigation water providers - 28 October 2009

The Rudd Government is providing a further \$2 million in funding to help irrigation water providers develop plans to modernise their irrigation infrastructure, Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong announced. Funding of up to \$350,000 each is available to irrigation water providers in the Murray-Darling Basin to help them develop modernisation plans.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/October/mr20091028a.aspx>

Helping to secure Australia's groundwater future - 19 October 2009

The Parliamentary Secretary for Water, the Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM MP, announced \$2.1 million in funding for three new projects to better manage Australia's groundwater whilst launching National Water Week 2009 at Parliament House in Canberra.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/kelly/2009/mr20091019.html>

\$7.34 million for potable water pipelines for Point Sturt and Hindmarsh Island - 14 October 2009

(Joint media release - Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, South Australian Minister for the River Murray and Minister for Water Security, Karlene Maywald)

Australian Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, and South Australian Minister for the River Murray, Karlene Maywald, announced up to \$7.34 million in funding for potable water pipeline extensions to Point Sturt and Hindmarsh Island. The Rudd Government contributed up to \$6.61 million and South Australia contributed \$734,000 to the project.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/October/mr20091014.aspx>

Expert panel to advise on Coorong and Lower Lakes - 12 October 2009

The Australian Government has appointed a new expert scientific panel to provide advice on the long-term management of the Coorong and Lower Lakes, Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, announced today.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/October/mr20091012.aspx>

Report on water reform welcomed - 09 October 2009

Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, today welcomed the release of the National Water Commission (NWC) 2009 Biennial Assessment. The report is a comprehensive assessment of progress against the 2004 National Water Initiative, Australia's blueprint for water reform.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/October/mr20091009.aspx>

\$21.7 million for irrigation efficiency in the Gwydir Valley - 06 October 2009

The Australian Government is providing \$21.7 million to the Gwydir Valley Pilot Project to support more efficient irrigation through on-farm modernisation projects. The funding is part of the Government's \$3.7 billion commitment to State Priority Projects in the Murray-Darling Basin.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/October/mr20091007.aspx>

Proposals invited for \$300 million on-farm irrigation program - 6 October 2009

The Rudd Government is calling for proposals for a new \$300 million on-farm irrigation efficiency grants program to help deliver a long-term sustainable future for Murray-Darling Basin irrigation communities.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/October/mr20091006.aspx>



Regional communities invited to Water for the Future information sessions - 2 October 2009

The Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts will hold a series of community information sessions throughout the Murray-Darling Basin on the Australian Government's Water for the Future plan, Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong announced today.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/October/mr20091002.aspx>

Call for water savings proposals for Australian towns and small cities - 1 October 2009

The Rudd Government is seeking proposals to develop and implement practical projects to help secure urban water supplies in Australian towns and cities with fewer than 50,000 people.

<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/en/minister/wong/2009/media-releases/October/mr20091001.aspx>